

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET  
BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Future of Site known as Qrendi Old Bomb Dump

A site known as Qrendi Old Bomb Dump, situated at the limits of Siggiewi, and held by the British Authorities for defence purposes, was granted by them, under licence, to Major A. Dimech for the purpose of cultivation and grazing rights. This licence expired on 15th August, 1970.

2. The occupation by Major Dimech of this site which is understood to cover 41½ acres, was the subject of a Question in Parliament, earlier this year, and the enquiries made to ascertain the facts of the matter revealed that the manner in which the British Authorities issued a licence to Major Dimech was not strictly in conformity with the provisions regulating the issue of such licences by them. The defence arrangements lay down that the British Authorities may only issue a licence without the consent of the Government for land held but not actively in use by them, (a) to local farmers for the purpose of grazing animals, or (b) for temporary agricultural purposes. They could also confirm by licence, an occupancy existing immediately before Independence.

3. The consent of the Malta Government was not sought before the issue of this licence, nor was Major Dimech in occupation immediately before Independence. The nature of Major Dimech's occupancy of the site extended beyond what could reasonably be termed "temporary agricultural purposes", and he himself early this year applied to the Commissioner of Land for a 15-year lease on the site, when released by the British authorities for the purpose of large-scale cultivation and the raising of livestock for the local market. He had in the meantime, already ploughed and put under cultivation some 20 tumoli of land.

4. The British authorities' attention was drawn to the manner in which this licence had been issued and particularly to the fact that it was issued without the Government's prior agreement and in respect of land which was due to be surrendered within a short time. They were requested to restore the position to that obtaining before Major Dimech was permitted to enter into occupation. They maintained that the licence had been issued quite regularly and in accordance with their practice of ensuring that any land suitable for cultivation should, whenever possible, be made available for this purpose.

5. The position now is that whilst Major Dimech's licence expired on 15th August, 1970, and was not, of course, renewed, the British authorities are asking the Commissioner of Land to accept the surrender of this site, which he is not prepared to do unless with vacant possession, as should be the case. Major Dimech is therefore in occupation without title.



6. On the other hand, it is the practice to allocate Government land directly for the purposes of agriculture in order to prevent fragmentation, and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture, strongly recommends Major Dimech's request for a lease from the Government as he is known to be a very keen farmer, with the necessary technical knowledge, and because he requires the land mainly for the breeding and fattening of livestock.

7. Reduced to its simplest terms therefore, it is for decision whether Government would be justified in making a direct allocation of this land to Major Dimech, and be able to defend such a step, in the reasonable expectation that he would make good use of it, despite the fact that this would mean confirming an irregular situation, or whether it would be more advisable to call for applications from bona fide farmers or agricultural entrepreneurs, along with whom Major Dimech could bid. If the second alternative is selected, the British authorities would have to surrender the land with vacant possession.

9th October, 1970.

CABINET MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY

THE PRIME MINISTER

(9. 10. 70)

MEMO. No.

1627

SUBJECT

Future of site known as Qrendi Old Bomb Dump.

CABINET DECISION REQUESTED

Whether Government would be justified in making a direct allocation of the site known as Qrendi Old Bomb Dump to Major Dimech despite the fact that this would mean confirming an irregular situation or whether it would be more advisable to call for applications from bona fide farmers or agricultural entrepreneurs, along with whom Major Dimech could bid.